



The Benefits of Video Games for Fostering Social Connection

Introduction

Social connection is essential to health and wellbeing. High-quality relationships can improve an individual's ability to manage stress and depression, and contribute to longer, healthier lives.

Yet loneliness is becoming increasingly widespread. What is now recognised as an "epidemic" of loneliness and isolation is having serious impacts on the physical and mental health of too many people around the world.

In 2023, the U.S. Surgeon General issued an advisory on the topic, "Our Epidemic of Loneliness and Isolation: The U.S. Surgeon General's Advisory on the [Healing Effects of Social Connection](#)". Among several key takeaways, it [found](#) that:

Social connection significantly improves the health and well-being of all individuals. ... [It] reduces the risk of premature mortality. It can predict better physical and mental health outcomes and ease stress. Higher levels of connection can influence health-related behaviors. Educational and economic achievement are even impacted by connection.

Video Games Bring People Together

Video games have long been associated with entertainment, but the influence of games goes beyond entertainment alone. There is a growing body of scientific and academic research recognizing that video games can support the formation of meaningful connections — even if players have not met in the real world.¹

Recent studies show that players who play with others online report "stress relief," "fun challenges" and "companionship" at levels similar to being with friends in person. A [2020 study](#) said that "older adults in multiple-player exergames experienced lower levels of loneliness when compared to those in single-player games."

¹ From makeshift memorials to found family: How video games can help forge powerful human bonds
<https://www.cbc.ca/radio/connect-to-play-video-games-1.6802448>

A [2023 global Power of Play](#) report shows that not only are video games fun, they help players feel less anxious, less isolated and less stressed. The report highlights some of the significant health benefits derived from playing video games. The report, based on a global survey of nearly 13,000 active players and supported by academic research, outlines several key mental health advantages:

Combating Loneliness and Isolation: 55% of players noted that video games help them feel less isolated by connecting them with others. The social aspect of games, where players engage with friends, family, and even new acquaintances online, contributes significantly to reducing feelings of loneliness.

Stress Relief and Anxiety Reduction: 69% of global players reported that video games help them feel less stressed. 61% of players stated that games help reduce their anxiety levels. These effects are consistent across different countries, showcasing the universal appeal of games as a stress-relieving activity.

Positive Emotional Impact: Over half of the players believe that video games provide a healthy outlet for everyday challenges and help them feel happier. Many players also reported that gaming helps them get through difficult times, indicating a strong emotional support function of video games.

Support for Cognitive and Social Skills: Video games can improve various skills, including creativity, problem-solving, cognitive abilities, and teamwork. These enhancements are not only beneficial for personal development but also contribute to overall mental well-being by keeping the mind engaged and fostering social connections.

Video games have proven to be powerful tools for enhancing mental health. Recent studies emphasise their role in stress relief, combating loneliness, and improving emotional well-being. A [2020 study](#) found that approximately three in four participants report video games are beneficial to their mental health. The results hold true across age groups. Another [2014 study](#) found that children 10 to 15 years old experience lower level of stress from playing video games.

As the understanding of these benefits grows, video games are increasingly recognised as a valuable component of a holistic approach to social, emotional and mental health.

Learn more at thevgc.org.

